

GROUNDWATER DISCHARGES



THINK BLUE
SAN DIEGO

WHAT IS GROUNDWATER?

Groundwater is the water found under the land's surface. In areas where the water table is close to the surface, groundwater may naturally rise and flow via gravity to waterways or the storm drain system. Unlike the sewer system, which treats water, anything that flows into the storm drain system goes directly into San Diego's creeks, rivers, bays, beaches and, ultimately, the ocean. To protect water quality, only rainwater or uncontaminated and naturally-flowing groundwater should enter the storm drain system. This flyer will help you understand when groundwater is an allowable discharge and how you can protect our City's rivers, creeks, bays and ocean.

WHEN ARE GROUNDWATER DISCHARGES ALLOWED?

Groundwater is an allowable discharge under the following conditions:

1. Naturally flowing groundwater
2. Uncontaminated pumped or naturally flowing groundwater from single-family properties
3. Naturally flowing groundwater from multi-family or commercial properties
4. Uncontaminated pumped groundwater from multi-family or commercial properties with appropriate permit

If you require a permit from the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (San Diego Water Board). Visit <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sandiego/> or contact the Regional Board at 619-516-1990 for more information.

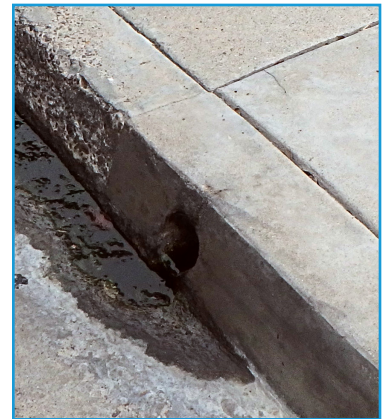
WHAT ARE ILLEGAL DISCHARGES?

Unlike groundwater or rainwater, which come from natural sources, illegal discharges come from human activity and can pollute our water bodies. Activities like overwatering landscapes, washing patios or irrigation leaks can cause pollutants like pet waste or trash to flow untreated through the storm drain system.

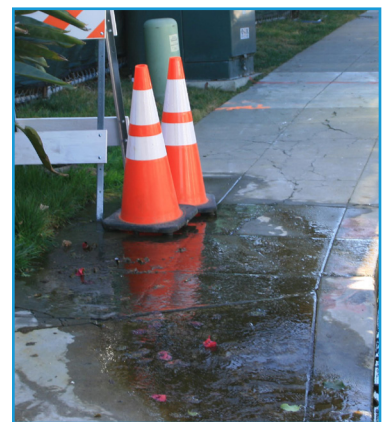
WHEN SHOULD YOU REPORT ILLEGAL DISCHARGES?

- After a rain event, wait at least 72 hours (three days) to report runoff if you do not know where it is coming from.
- If you observe an illegal discharge (e.g., overwatering, broken irrigation pipes or dumping into a storm drain), report it immediately.
- During dry weather, if you see water flowing into the storm drain, it is likely an illegal discharge and should be reported.

When you see illegal discharges or have street sweeping requests for known groundwater locations, submit a service request on the City's "Get it Done" app. You can also submit a service request at sandiego.gov/get-it-done or call the Stormwater Department at 619-235-1000.



Possible groundwater discharge



Possible groundwater discharge

IS GROUNDWATER FLOWING FROM MY PROPERTY?

Property owners are responsible for preventing pollutants from flowing into the storm drain system. If water is flowing consistently from your property, it is important to determine whether it is coming from natural groundwater flow or from a human-related source that may need to be fixed. Following the steps below can help to determine whether or not the observed discharge is groundwater:

- 💧 Wait at least 72 hours after a rain event to see if the flow stops.
- 💧 Check your water lines and irrigation system for leaks and address them if they are present.
- 💧 Turn off your irrigation system for at least a week to see if the flow stops.
- 💧 Check for connections to the storm drain system from water uses like heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) discharges, sump pumps or any other known sources. Be sure to note which area drains collect and discharge wash water and irrigation saturation. You can hire a licensed plumber if needed to help identify and fix any leaks.

After following these steps, it is the property owner's responsibility to determine the source of the discharge if it is still occurring. Please refer to the front of this document for a list of allowable groundwater discharges. For all other sources, here are some suggestions to help treat and control the discharge before it reaches the storm drain system:

- 💧 Divert the flow to a landscaped area where it can soak into the ground. Ensure the landscaped area is appropriately vegetated to avoid causing erosion.
- 💧 Install a stormwater infiltration feature like a dry creek bed or rain garden in your landscape.
- 💧 Questions to Ask When Troubleshooting:
 - Has the irrigation system been turned off?
 - Where are the area drains and what are they connected to (e.g., patios, lawns)?
 - Have you checked, or had a plumber check for leaks?
 - Do you have the plans for your private drainage system?
 - Have you checked for HVAC or other additional connections to your private drainage system?
 - Are there known sump pumps installed?

Visit thinkblue.org to learn more about how you can prevent runoff pollution from your property.